883
584 intimation of its course. The meeting may finally be arranged at the house of an older female friend. If the two are genuinely interested in each other they may allow the fact to become public, and if the parents are pleased they will in due course [836] be married. Otherwise the girl may keep the whole affair a secret, and after a period of flirtation have an affair with the [263] boy and become pregnant. Any girl who refuses to eat pepper is immediately suspected of pregnancy, and inquiries are [843] made.

*565 When a Class C family wishes to celebrate some occasion such as a birthday, anniversary, or the time in which the twin 574 saints Cosme and Damião are feasted, the woman's friends and any nearby female relatives come in to help her cook. 252 Guests are invited by the husband. The preparation of all 262 food must be done by hand, the chickens killed, cleaned, and [476] plucked, the beans shelled, the shrimp and fish cleaned, the farina cakes made, and the popular liqueurs (licores) prepared [273] by soaking various kinds of fruit in bottles of rum and syrup. At such parties the traditional, favorite Bahian dishes of vatapá, acarejé, carurú, abará, cuscus, and the many moquecas, [251] are served. All these are appetizing, but take much time to prepare and cannot be made too far in advance, for there *565 is no way of preserving food. Unless the household is particularly wealthy, the family seldom gives parties; many never 574 manage to give one. Dancing forms an important part of the 535 festivities. The men bring their drums, tambourines, and gui- [369] tars, while the women sing and dance the samba. In the rural area, social dancing in mixed couples is rare, but in town it is a common form.

*565 A family may take care of an aged mother, father, or even godparent, or of some other relative on either side. Such a •888 person is well cared for within the family means. Most people 736 in Vila Recôncavo are generous toward others who are in some way unfortunate, and help them if they can. There is little or no complaint if the household has to take in an infirm or aged relative; most people say that the same may happen to them one day and they will have to be taken care of. Perhaps the old person helped them in some way in the past when they needed aid and is now being repaid. Or if some older person wants to live alone, a group of neighbors and relatives all help in preparing meals and supplying food and other wants over an extended period of time. There is no case in Vila Recôncavo of an elderly person being sent to a public institution.

VILA RECÔNCAVO

[Class D Families]

*565 592 848 remarkable fact about these female households is that mother and children manage to remain together as long as they do. Usually the husbandless woman finds work as a laundress or at ironing, or dries fish (xangó), three tasks which permit her to keep her children near her. When she becomes a cook or servant in someone's home, it is common for her to take the children to work and let them play nearby in the back yard. In such a case her children may eventually receive aid from her employer, who because of the children's continued presence in the house becomes fond of them and wants to do something for them. If this does not happen, the mother herself [464] must take care of their future. As a rule, boys from such families leave town as soon as they are old enough, finding employment in Salvador. Girls, on the other hand, remain with their mothers more often than leaving. If they do leave, they often return, like Maria José, with children of their own.

*565 592 735 ● 888 Because of the poverty of these households, there is little or no provision for the care of older people, and it is from this class that come the very few, poor, old women who beg for food, medicine, and other aid. The people of the town are in general extremely generous in view of their own financial circumstances, and they do what they can to help. In Vila Recôncavo there are no "professional" beggars; there is no one [157] seated on a street corner asking for alms. There is, instead, a very proud spirit of independence, and having to go from door to door (or, rather, from kitchen to kitchen) asking for food or money is highly repugnant. Families will often send food to an old person regularly in order to avoid face-to-face contact with begging. Begging is also sometimes done through a third person, often a child, again to avoid face-to-face relationships in asking for aid.

*565 369 Class D does not exist in the rural area, for reasons already noted, particularly the pressure brought to bear by plantation owners and administrators. In addition, however, it also seems that women can only support themselves and their children in the more crowded urban areas, where they can find work which allows them to be near their children.